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The Disputed Boundary between Alaska and British Columbia.

THE boundary line between the United States and the British possessions in North America once more threatens to become the subject of international dispute, conference, and arbitration. A half century ago "Fifty-four Forty or Fight" was a campaign cry, and the coming controversy begins at that line, from which President Polk retreated, the once northern boundary of Oregon Territory being the southern boundary of our territory of Alaska. The discussion of the ownership of Revillagigedo, Pearse, and Wales Islands, and of the line of the Portland Canal, will rival the contest over San Juan Island and San Rosario or De Haro Straits, decided in favor of the United States by the Emperor of Germany as arbitrator, in 1872.

Each year that the boundary line between Alaska and British Columbia remains in question increases the difficulty of determining it. Each year settlements are

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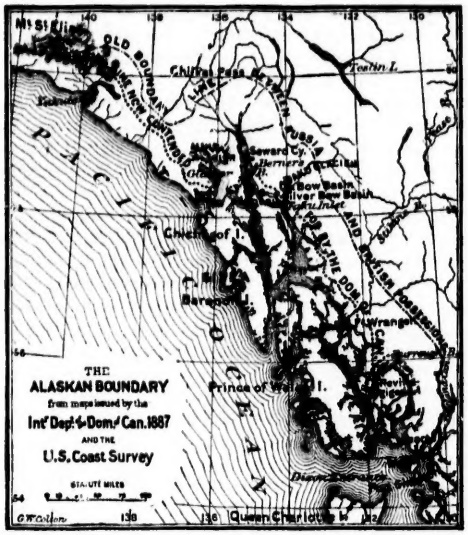


increasing in numbers, more private interests are involved, and the region in dispute becomes more valuable to either claimant. There is great indifference to the question on our side of the line, but in the Dominion it is well understood, and Parliament and public opinion have taken their stand. Canadian maps now differ from United States maps of that northwestern region, and this boundary question promises to provoke more international bitterness than the present Bering Sea dispute concerning the interests of a single company of fur-traders.

By his ukase of 1821, forbidding all foreign vessels from approaching within one hundred Italian miles of his possessions on either shore of the North Pacific, the Emperor of Russia purposely brought about the conferences of 1824 and 1825. Then were adjusted the claims of Russia, England, and the United States to various sections of the northwest coast of America. As the result, Russia was secured in the possession of the coast and adjacent islands, from the Arctic Ocean down to the line of 54° 40′, on the ground of Russian discovery and settlement, together with the northernmost third of the uninhabited and useless interior.

All overtures from England for the purchase of "the thirty mile strip" of coast accorded to Russia and now known as Southeastern Alaska were refused, but the tract was leased by the Russian government to the Hudson's Bay Company until 1867, when the Treaty of Washington, consummating the Seward purchase, once more defined its boundaries:

ARTICLE I.

His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias agrees to cede to the United States, by this convention, immediately upon the exchange of the ratifications thereof, all the territory and dominion now possessed by his said Majesty on the continent of America and in the adjacent islands, the same being contained within the geographical limits herein set forth, to wit: The eastern limit is the line of demarcation between the Russian and the British possessions in North America, as established by the convention between Russia and Great Britain, of February 28–16, 1825, and described in Articles III and IV of said convention, in the following terms:

"Commencing from the southernmost point of the island called Prince of Wales Island, which point lies in the parallel of 54 degrees 40 minutes north latitude, and between the 131st and the 133d degree of west longitude (meridian of Greenwich), the said line shall ascend to the north along the channel called Portland Channel, as far as the point of the continent where it strikes the 56th degree of north latitude; from this last-mentioned point, the line of demarcation shall follow the summit of the mountains situated parallel to the coast as far as the point of intersection of the 141st degree of west longitude (of the same meridian); and finally, from the said point of intersection, the said meridian line of the 141st degree, in its prolongation as far as the Frozen Ocean.

"IV. With reference to the line of demarcation, laid down in the preceding article, it is understood—

"1st. That the island called Prince of Wales Island shall belong wholly to Russia" (now, by this cession, to the United States).

"2d. That whenever the summit of the mountains which extend in a direction parallel to the coast from the 56th degree of north latitude to the point of intersection of the 141st degree of west longitude shall prove to be at the distance of more than ten marine leagues from the ocean, the limit between the British possessions and the line of coast which is to belong to Russia as above mentioned (that is to say, the limit to the possessions ceded by this convention) shall be formed by a line parallel to the winding of the coast, and which shall never exceed the distance of ten marine leagues therefrom."

The first contention as to the position of the boundary line between Alaska and British Columbia arose in 1873–74, when thousands of miners of different nationalities rushed to the Stikine River and the Cassiar region at its head-waters. Gold commissioners, customs officers, and sheriffs were alike defied; mining camps on the Stikine were first under one flag and then under another; the custom house was moved from place to place, and criminals escaped trial upon mere technicalities, until a temporary and approximate line on the thirty mile basis was agreed upon by the British Columbian officials and the United States military authorities, then in control of Alaska. The custom house and Hudson's Bay Company's post still remain, as then placed, at a distance of sixty miles from the mouth of the winding river.

Since 1878, prospectors, often to the number of five hundred in a single season, have crossed the Chilkat Pass to the rich placer regions along the Upper Yukon. Coarse gold and dust to the value of $40,000 or $50,000 have been carried out each year. A few seasons since, the Canadian gold commissioner visited the camps on Forty Mile Creek to collect fees and prevent unlicensed miners from working. The men claimed that they were within Alaskan boundaries, and as they were a rough and muscular set the commissioner retreated, and the question of miners' licenses in that region was waived until the two governments should determine and mark the line of the 141st meridian, which there forms the international boundary line.

The official Canadian map of 1887 places Forty Mile Creek that many miles within British limits. Although no official publication has been made, returning miners have brought word that the Turner and McGrath parties of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey have determined that the meridian line crosses the Yukon almost at the mouth of Forty Mile Creek, leaving those rich placers in Alaska.

During the sessions of the Fisheries Conference at Washington, 1887–88, an informal discussion of this boundary question was arranged by Secretary Bayard and Sir Charles Tupper. Dr. W. H. Dall of the Smithsonian Institution and United States Geological

Survey, and Dr. G. M. Dawson of the Dominion Geological Survey were chosen as conferees, both being personally acquainted with the region in dispute. Dr. Dall is the most eminent authority on Alaskan matters, his close connection with the territory dating from his camping on the Upper Yukon in 1866–68. Dr. Dawson has for almost the same time devoted himself to surveys and scientific work in British Columbia.

By the Canadian interpretation in 1887 of the treaty's phrases, a considerable portion of the "thirty mile strip" which Russia had declined to sell to Great Britain, and which had always been mapped as Russian or United States possessions, is now claimed as British territory. Dr. Dawson's arguments were reinforced by a report and map made by Major-General R. D. Cameron of the British army, and parliamentary instructions had been given him to insist upon General Cameron's lines and yield nothing. Dr. Dall's report and memoranda of the discussion, including the papers and charts pertaining thereto, were published as "Extra Senate Document No. 146, 50th Congress — 2d Session," and there the subject was dropped.

The official Canadian map of 1887 shows General Cameron's lines, which disregard the old acceptation of the meaning of the treaties' clauses, previous maps, and even British admiralty charts. Dr. Dawson claims that "the crest (or summit) of the mountains situated parallel to the coast" means the summit of the first range of precipitous foot-hills, "everywhere rising immediately from the coast and which borders upon the sea . . . . and probably at an average distance of considerably less than five miles from it." The phrase "Ten marine leagues from the coast" is never considered, and as the coast presents no windings nor indentations to General Cameron's eye, he draws his line from Mount St. Elias southward without regard to such irregularities, or to the explicit instructions that the boundary line should run parallel to those windings. The Cameron line leaps bays and inlets, and breaks that portion of the Alaska coast into alternating patches of British and United States territory. This line does not even follow "along the channel known as Portland Channel" (to quote the treaty), but along Clarence Strait, Boehm Canal, and Burroughs Bay, thus including within British limits Revillagigedo and many smaller Alaskan islands, and a great peninsula as well.

By this picturesque method of partitioning Alaska, the boundary line would cross almost at the mouth of Glacier Bay, of Lynn Canal, and Taku Inlet; and on the Stikine River the boundary line would slip fifty miles down stream. Were it accepted, many canneries and settlements, the mining camps of Berners Bay and Seward City, the rich Silver Bow and Dix Bow basins back of Juneau would pass under the British flag, and the Muir, Taku, and other great tidewater glaciers — our most unique scenic possessions on this continent — would be taken from us.

On the first of July, 1891, the citizens of Alaska may, for the first time, enter town sites, purchase and obtain titles to their holdings, other than mineral claims, and legally cut timber; and this recent extension of the general land laws will rapidly attract settlers and investors into the region claimed as part of British Columbia. The completion of the Nowell tunnel and other costly pieces of mining engineering, opening basins back of Juneau, the erection of new stamp mills in remote cañons, and further discoveries of gold placers and silver leads must invite the attention of the Canadian authorities to all this unlicensed mining, if the Dominion is to contest its claim. No one knowing the American miner, prospector, and frontiersman doubts that there will be forcible resistance to British officers, if necessary.

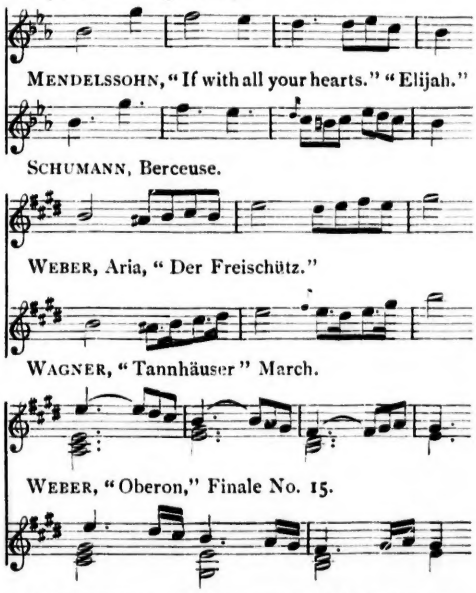
In any appeal to arms, the United States would be at every disadvantage in protecting Alaska, the impossibility of defending that possession being the chief reason for Russia's sale of it. There is no military force in Alaska, and no telegraphic communication beyond Nanaimo, British Columbia; there are no complete charts of its intricate water-ways, no lighthouses, and only one small man-of-war at Sitka. The British Asiatic squadron of twenty-four modern ships can reach Bering Sea in five days from its summer rendezvous at Hakodate, and Sitka but a few days later; and their naval force at Esquimault is sufficient to close Puget Sound and the inside passage northward.

To illustrate the importance which British and Canadian officials attach to an early settlement of this boundary dispute, it will be remembered that Sir Charles Tupper and his colleagues were instructed to discuss this matter with Secretary Blaine at the informal conference concerning a reciprocity treaty between Canada and the United States, which these commissioners had hoped to hold in Washington in April, 1891.

Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore.

Similar Musical Phrases in Great Composers.

I HAVE thought it interesting to note some curious instances of the same musical phrase being conceived by different great composers. Those, that to the best of my knowledge I imagine to have been the first, I have put in the original key:



MENDELSSOHN, "If with all your hearts." "Elijah."

SCHUMANN, Berceuse.

WEBER, Aria, "Der Freischütz."

WAGNER, "Tannhäuser" March.

WEBER, "Oberon," Finale No. 15.

MENDELSSOHN, "Midsummer Night's Dream." In this instance, the harmony differs somewhat.